

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 IO-12 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 AID-20 IGA-02 GAC-01 SR-02 ORM-03

RSR-01 /159 W

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R 231830 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8927

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS ROME 4347

E. O. 11652 N/ A

TAGS: PFOR XF TS

SUBJ: BOURGUIBA INTERVIEW

DEPT PASS USINT CAIRO

DEPT PASS USINT ALGIERS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH ITALIAN PAPER BOURGUIBA HINTED AT POSSIBLE ROLE FOR HIMSELF AS MID EAST MEDIATOR. HE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT EGYPTIANS AND MAJORITY OF ARABS WANT PEACEFUL SOLUTION THOUGHT AT SAME TIME THEY MUST PREPARE FOR WAR. HE CAUTIONED THAT IF PEACE EFFORTS FAIL WAR UNCLASSIFIED

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IS POSSIBLE. HE REITERATED HIS WELL- KNOWN VIEWS ON PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. HE URGED US TO TALK WITH PALESTINIANS AND SAID US FLEET SHOULD STAY IN MEDITERRANEAN IF US IS TO SUCCEED IN RE- ESTABLISHING MID- EAST PEACE. BOURGUIBA WAS SKEPTICAL ABOUT

EGYPT/ LIBYA UNION AND SAID QADHAFI THOUGH WELL- INTENTIONED WAS INEXPERIENCED. END SUMMARY.

2. ON MAY 23 INFLUENTIAL MILAN DAILY, / CORRIERE DELLA SERA,/ CARRIED EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH TUNISIAN PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA UNDER SOMEWHAT MISLEADING HEADLINE, " I AM READY TO TALK PEACE WITH ISRAEL". INTERVIEWER WAS PAPER'S MID- EAST EXPERT, DINO FRESCOBALDI, AND INTERVIEW REPORTEDLY GRANTED BECAUSE OF FORTHCOMING BOURGUIBA VISIT TO ITALY JUNE 12-14.

3. CONCERNING HIS OWN POSSIBLE ROLE AS MID- EAST MEDIATOR, BOURGUIBA MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO SERIES OF QUESTIONS: (A) " AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED, I HAVE NO REPEAT NO DIFFICULTY IN MEETING WITH AN ISRAELI; THAT IS, AN ISRAELI JEW WHO UNDERSTANDS THE NECESSITY FOR PEACE." (B) RE WHETHER HE WOULD CONSIDER BECOMING MEDIATOR, BOURGUIBA SAID, " I DO NOT WISH IT, BECAUSE THERE IS RISK OF BEING JUDGED BADLY FROM BOTH SIDES, BUT, ON PRACTICAL PLANE, IF ONE SPEAKS OF MEETING WITH THIS OR THAT PERSON IN ROME, ATHENS, MALTA OR ELSEWHERE, THIS COULD BE DISCUSSED AND AGREEMENT REACHED EASILY. THE ESSENTIAL THING IS TO BE READY TO USE LANGUAGE OF REASON." (C) RE WHICH ARAB LEADER HE CONSIDERS CLOSEST TO HIS OWN VIEWS ON MID- EAST SITUATION, BOURGUIBA NAMED PRESIDENT SADAT. (D) REGARDING ARAFAT A POSSIBLE INTERLOCUTOR, BOURGUIBA REPLIED, " HE (ARAFAT) IS UNDOUBTEDLY A VERY VALID INTERLOCUTOR."

4. SUMMARY OF BOURGUIBA'S COMMENTS ON OTHER SUBJECTS: (A). HE DESCRIBED PRESENT MID- EAST SITUATION AS " DELICATE" AND CAUTIONED THAT IF PEACE EFFORTS FAIL, WAR OR " DESPERATE GESTURE" IS POSSIBLE. RE EGYPTIAN POLICY, HE ASSERTED SADAT HAS NOT RPT NOT LOST HOPE IN REASONABLE AND PEACEFUL SOLUTION WHICH WOULD PERMIT HIM TO MAKE PEACE " WITHOUT LOSING FACE AND WITHOUT RENOUNCING ANY PART OF EGYPTIAN TERRITORY." ACCORDING BOURGUIBA, SADAT LOOKING TO EUROPEANS AS WELL AS U. S. TO HELP FIND " HONORABLE COMPROMISES"; HE DESCRIBED EC ROLE AS ONE OF PUTTING PRESSURE ON U. S. TO INTERVENE. HE WARNED THAT " WHERE JUSTICE IS IGNORED, PEACE CANNOT BE SOLID", AND SAID HE HAD UNCLASSIFIED

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MADE THIS POINT REPEATEDLY IN CONVERSATIONS WITH U. S. LEADERS. HE CRITICIZED U. S. AID TO ISRAEL WHICH EXPLOITED AID TO " MULTIPLY AGGRESSION" AGAINST ARABS, ALTHOUGH HE ACKNOWLEDGED NEED TO MAINTAIN CERTAIN " BALANCE OF FORCES TO PERMIT ISRAEL TO EXIST." HE ACCUSED ISRAEL OF POLICY OF ANNEXATION AND OF NOT RESPECTING SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS. (B) RE PALESTINE PROBLEM ITSELF, HE INDICATED PARTITION PLAN, THOUGH UNSATISFACTORY, MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORKABLE. HE ENVISAGED POSSIBILITY OF ISRAELI/ PALESTINIAN CO- EXISTENCE ON TERRITORY OF OLD PALESTINE, WHICH MIGHT EVENTUALLY EVOLVE INTO UNITARY, SECULAR STATE. HE DEPLORED ACTIONS OF PALESTINIAN TERRORISTS WHICH HE SAID HOWEVER, COULD BE EXPLAINED AS ACTS OF DESPERATION WHICH ANYONE WITH A " SENSE OF HUMAN DIGNITY" MUST UNDERSTAND. HE SAID THAT THE FEDAYEEN

ORGANIZATIONS WERE TRULY REPRESENTATIVE OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, AND THAT THEY COULD NOT RPT NOT BE IGNORED, PARTICULARLY BY THE U. S. IN WORKING OUT A SETTLEMENT. HE ASSERTED THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO STRENGTHEN THE "DOVES" AMONG PALESTINIANS, AND THAT THERE WERE ALSO "DOVES" IN ISRAEL.

(C) BOURGUIBA CONTENTED THAT A MILITARY SOLUTION IS NOT RPT NOT FEASIBLE FOR EITHER ARABS OR ISRAELIS. HE SAID MAJORITY OF ARAB GOVERNMENTS WERE "DOVES". ASKED ABOUT MILITANCY OF LIBYA AND ALGERIA, HE REMARKED THAT THERE ARE COUNTRIES BORDERING ISRAEL AND COUNTRIES FAR DISTANT, AND, "IF INTERESTED PARTIES AGREE, LET US NOT ASK FOR MORE." HE SAID EGYPT IS WILLING TO MAKE PEACE WITH ISRAEL; OPEN CANAL TO ITS SHIPS, AND RECOGNIZE ISRAEL.

HOWEVER, SADAT AT SAME TIME IS OBLIGED TO PREPARE COUNTRY AND PEOPLE FOR EVENTUALITY OF WAR. ASKED WHAT HE WOULD DO IF HE WERE SADAT, BOURGUIBA ANSWERED THAT HE WOULD FOLLOW SIMILAR POLICY, I. E., PREPARE FOR A NEW WAR, BUT AT SAME TIME MAKE SINCERE EFFORT BY DIPLOMATIC MEANS TO ACHIEVE PEACE

WITHOUT MAKING WAR. (D) RE U. S. ROLE, BOURGUIBA SAID U. S. HAS NOTHING TO GAIN BY BEING CONSIDERED "NUMBER ONE ENEMY" OF ARABS, IF, FOR NO OTHER REASON, BECAUSE OF ITS PETROLEUM INTERESTS IN AREA. USING VIETNAM AS EXAMPLE, HE URGED U. S. TO TALK WITH PALESTINIANS AND TO ASCERTAIN WHAT THEY HAVE ON THEIR MINDS.

(E) RE PRESENCE OF SUPER POWER FLEETS IN MEDITERRANEAN, BOURGUIBA SAID IF U. S. IS TO SUCCEED IN REESTABLISHING PEACE IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, ITS PRESENCE IS IMPORTANT. HE ATTRIBUTED SOVIET FLEET PRESENCE TO "COMPLICATIONS" ARISING FROM JUNE 1967 WAR. (F) RE EGYPT/LIBYA UNION, BOURGUIBA SAID HE HAD

ALREADY TOLD QADHAFI THAT "ARAB UNITY IS A DREAM." HE UNCLASSIFIED

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EXPRESSED VIEW THAT UNION BETWEEN LIBYA AND EGYPT IS "AGAINST LAWS OF NATURE AND SOCIETY", SINCE TWO PEOPLES ARE ON DIFFERENT LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT. HE NOTED OTHER UNIONS EFFECTED UNDER NASSER HAD NOT RPT NOT ENDURED, AND REMARKED THAT UNIONS MIGHT BE POSSIBLE ON PAPER, BUT TO BECOME REALITY THEY WOULD REQUIRE "MANY YEARS, PERHAPS CENTURIES". (G) ASKED ABOUT QADHAFI CULTURAL REVOLUTION, BOURGUIBA DESCRIBED QADHAFI AS "YOUNG MAN, FULL OF ENTHUSIASM AND GOOD WILL, WHO WISHES TO CHANGE THINGS, AND STIR UP WORLD WITH MONEY HE HAS, BUT HE DOES NOT RPT NOT HAVE MUCH EXPERIENCE." ASKED IF SADAT MIGHT BE FORCED INTO DESPERATION GESTURE SHOULD UNION WITH LIBYA FAIL, BOURGUIBA SAID HE DID NOT THINK SO SINCE EGYPT WAS AN ANCIENT COUNTRY WHICH COULD EXIST VERY WELL ON ITS OWN. VOLPE

NOTE BY OC/ T: NOT PASSED CAIRO, ALGIERS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 MAY 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973ROME04347
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730560/abqcegytm.tel
Line Count: 157
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kellerpr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03-Aug-2001 by reddocgw>; APPROVED <20-Aug-2001 by kellerpr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 980227
Subject: BOURGUIBA INTERVIEW
TAGS: PFOR, TS, XF
To: STATE INFO AMMAN
BEIRUT
BONN
LONDON
MOSCOW
PARIS
RABAT

TEL AVIV
TRIPOLI
TUNIS
USUN N Y
Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005